

Ways to Say I Love You: Without Meaning It by finnxwheeler

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Summary:

Older!Byeler. The title is pretty self-explanatory.

Ways to Say I Love You: Without Meaning It

Author's Note:

I got a request on this on Tumblr and posted it there as well. Enjoy!

When something changes or begins to change, it is usually noticed straight away. But when it is the heart that begins to change, even gradually, how long until it is noticeable within oneself? How long until the fog lifts and things become clearer? How long until those feelings come to the forefront and make one realize what is happening? How long until the events taking place are accepted?

Mike Wheeler asked himself those very questions—and more—on several occasions. He honestly didn't know how it had happened or when, but it had nevertheless. He'd met an extraordinary woman named Alessandra at work, and the two had hit it off rather quickly. They started off as close friends, eating lunch together every day and carpooling together occasionally, as well as crying on each other's shoulder when needed. Mike went to her after big fights with his husband, Will Byers, and Alessandra came to Mike after breaking up with her boyfriend Derrick. Somewhere along the way, in between everything they'd been through together, Mike had developed feelings for her that a married man shouldn't feel for anyone but their spouse. The guilt, confusion, self-anger, and fear that Mike felt was nearly overwhelming. He presently knew that his feelings for Alessandra were much stronger than they had been initially, and he could no longer keep telling himself that he wasn't a bad person for it.

Currently, Mike was sipping on red wine in the living room of the home he shared with Will, mulling over how to handle the situation. He knew that Will would be the one hurting from all of this, and the fact that Will would be upset and would cry, beg, question, and possibly hate Mike, was too much for Mike to bear. Will meant the world to him and so much more even still, and the thought of Will never speaking to him again because of Alessandra made Mike so anxious and depressed that he could barely function.

Will. Beautiful, sweet, caring, selfless, loving, adorable Will. How could Mike ever hurt him? How could he look his husband of two years & best friend for over twenty in the eye, and tell him that he had fallen in love with someone else and no longer loved Will romantically? Mike had never intended for that to happen, but here he was: Filled with dread and great sadness for having to break Will's heart due to the fact that Mike was head-over-heels in love with his own co-worker.

Mike had tried so hard to get over Alessandra on his own. He'd tried everything, even avoiding her as best as he could for a short while, but of course that didn't work. The more time he spent away from her, the more he fell in love. Every night he went to bed with Will, falling asleep with him in his arms, and the last thing Mike would see before finally succumbing to sleep would be Alessandra. He would see her beautiful hazel eyes, he would hear her laughter and her voice, he would smell her perfume, and he would smile about it. Sometimes he would even imagine that it was Alessandra in his arms at night, rather than Will. It was a vicious cycle: Think of Alessandra, feel guilty, hate self, stress out about what to do, repeat.

But tonight was the night where he was going to come clean to Will. He was absolutely determined to end this one way or another. He was so tired of worrying and anticipating every possible outcome, and knew that he had to take immediate action. As much as he hated to hurt Will, he had to do it. He was out of options.

As if on cue, Mike heard the key in the front door and knew that Will was home from work. He hoped and prayed that Will had experienced a good day, because Mike did not know what he would do if he put off this conversation. He would likely lose what was left of his sanity if he had to do that, truth be told.

"Mikey!" Will's cheerful voice rang from the foyer. "I'm home!"

Mike's heart began to crack as he heard the joy in Will's voice, knowing that soon Will would be feeling an entirely different, opposite emotion. Mike nearly slammed his fist into the arm of the couch because his frustration and self-anger was nearly overwhelming. He hated the entire situation. He hated himself. Mike had a very brief moment where he nearly jumped up from the couch

and fled, but he maintained his cool as best as he could. He just didn't want to have to look at Will being so happy, and then ruin that with the news that Mike no longer loved him, and that Mike had fallen in love with someone else instead.

Why couldn't this just be easier?

"Mikey?" Will called. "Where are you?"

"In here," Mike croaked, clearing his throat and managing a louder, "In here, Will!"

Mike heard Will's footsteps scurrying toward the living room, Will's face lighting up as he saw his husband sitting stiffly on the sofa. Will ran to him, jumping into Mike's lap and peppering his face with kisses before lying against Mike's chest with a soft purr. "I missed you today!" he said. "I thought about you a lot more than usual, did you know that?"

"Oh, did you?" Mike asked, trying to keep his emotions at bay by maintaining a level tone. "How's come?"

"I don't know," Will said. "But it really made me think a lot."

"About what, may I ask?" Mike said curiously.

"Us," Will stated. "About all we've been through, both good and bad, and wanting to show you how much I love and appreciate you."

"Oh," Mike said, feigning a smile as he squeezed Will's shoulder. "You didn't have to do that, Willie."

"But I wanted to!" Will chirped. "I wanted to, because I never get to as much as I really want, and now I have a chance! My job has been paying super-well since I got promoted and...well, come on! I'll show you!"

"Later," Mike insisted. "I really have to talk to you. It's impor—"

"Later!" Will repeated, his tone more joyful than Mike's had been. "We'll talk later! Please, Mikey? I've been dying to show you all day long!"

Mike sighed, admitting defeat and standing from the sofa. He couldn't help but wonder what Will had done, and he found his mind wandering from Alessandra and the conversation Mike wanted to have. Still, Mike began to consider whether or not he would lose the nerve to confess everything to Will. It seemed to be a definite now-or-never moment, but Will wouldn't allow Mike to speak to his mind just yet. Once the surprise was out of the way, then they would talk. Mike was more than determined to do so.

Will suddenly covered Mike's eyes, causing Mike to yelp in surprise and be pulled out of his own head. "No peeking!" Will said with a loud laugh. "Don't even think about it, Mike!"

"I won't," Mike promised with a soft chuckle, allowing Will to lead him outside.

Mike could feel the excitement radiating from Will, and that made Mike feel even worse. Before he could tell Will to wait, that they truly did need to talk first, Will was pulling his hands away to free Mike's vision. Mike blinked, getting his eyes used to the dimming natural light as he tried to take in the shape in the driveway.

"Surprise!" Will squealed, bouncing on his heels as he moved from behind Mike.

Mike's jaw dropped when he could properly see again, taking in Will's surprise in stunned silence. Sitting in the driveway was a brand-new cherry red Ferrari convertible, shining in the fading light of dusk, with a big black gift ribbon on the roof. Mike walked over, ghosting his fingertips against the hood to make sure he wasn't dreaming or at least hallucinating. Mike honestly was completely and utterly speechless. This had been one of the greatest gifts he'd ever received, and it was a just-because present. It wasn't Mike's birthday or Christmas; this was because Will loved him so much and wanted Mike to feel as loved as he truly was. All Will wanted to do was make Mike happy and to make sure that he was always feeling nothing but joy.

If Mike hadn't felt like scum of the earth before, he was definitely feeling it now.

“Will,” Mike began, swallowing and wringing his hands anxiously. “I don’t...I don’t even know what to say—“

“Don’t say anything,” Will interrupted gently, standing next to Mike as Will took his hand. “I love you so much, Mikey, and I wanted to get this for you. You needed a new car, number one, and number two, you deserve nothing but the absolute best. You’re my whole world, and I just...wanted you to have something nice.”

“But still, this is so expensive,” Mike said. “But I love it. I really love it so much, Will. Thank you.”

Will pulled Mike into an embrace then, burying his face in Mike’s neck with a content sigh. “I’m so glad that you love it. I love you to the moon and back a billion times over, Mike Wheeler.

Mike stood there, holding his husband with tears falling down his freckled cheeks as he studied the new car. Mike knew that he no longer loved Will, but how could he tell Will everything after this? Mike knew that he would likely lose his courage and it had happened, but Mike did still care deeply about Will. Raining on Will’s parade now would be an overall horrible thing to do, so why do it right now? Mike could wait a little longer, even if it meant prolonging his own suffering. He’d rather be miserable than see Will so deeply hurt or have him hate Mike, in any case. Alessandra could wait. Spilling his guts could wait. Right now, Will was the most important priority.

So, what could Mike do for the time being? He could lie, and that is exactly what he did.

“I love you, too, Will. I love you so very much, my beautiful baby doll. Now until the end of time, I will always love and cherish you. Thank you for choosing me to spend the rest of your life with, William Wheeler. I promise I will never, ever let you down.”